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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused June 21-23 news coverage on the peaceful resolution to a recent dispute between Taiwan and Japan, triggered by the collision between a Taiwan fishing boat and a Japanese frigate in early June; on President Ma Ying-jeou's nomination of Control Yuan members Friday; and on the oil and electricity price hikes in Taiwan. Several papers also reported on U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent interview with the "Wall Street Journal." The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on page two in its June 23 edition, reading "Rice: the United States Hopes to See Taiwan Have Real Space in the International Community."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" analysis discussed Secretary Rice's remarks on U.S.-Taiwan relations and said President Ma has personally destroyed the balance of power among Washington, Beijing and Taipei by tilting quickly toward China. A separate "Liberty Times" commentary also questioned whether the Ma administration is changing Taiwan's strategic direction by leaning towards China and distancing itself from the United States and Japan. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News," however, said that with thawing cross-Straits relations, relations among the United States, Taiwan, China and Japan will become more vibrant. End summary.

A) "Lurching toward China, Ma Has Personally Destroyed the Balance of Power among the United States, China and Taiwan"

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Tsou Jiing-wen wrote in an analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (6/23):

"... Having kept silence for a while, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice finally gave remarks that were both profound and mysterious! 'The United States has a relationship with Taiwan as well' -- this was a statement meant for everyone; in particular, Rice was reminding those who have almost forgotten that the United States has a relationship with Taiwan. Was Taiwan's new administration included [in those whom Rice was addressing]? 'Mr. Ma' should know the answer better than anyone else. In contrast to [Taiwan's] praise and kow-tows for China lately, some unusual signals can be seen in the Ma administration's conduct of foreign relations.

"The first one has to do with the resumed talks between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS). Diplomatic circles in both Washington and Tokyo have privately complained that Taipei failed to follow precedent and notify them [of the content of the SEF-ARATS talks] beforehand. The consistency in their complaints was pretty unusual. The other signal came from a Washington Post report, which, as some have alleged, helped Washington release the information that it is Taiwan that has hoped to shelve the arms procurements [from the United States]. The background of such a report is thought-provoking, and [Taiwan's] opposition party has directly been targeting [its criticism at] National Security Council Secretary-General Su Chi. Even though the Presidential Office has denied such a report, it may not be totally groundless.

"[Ma] was greatly supported by the Americans during the process of his campaigning, but since he assumed office, he has continuously received comments from Washington wrapped in diplomatic rhetoric. Any discerning person cannot overlook the lack of mutual trust between [Ma and Washington.] Who is the big boss in this triangle of power? [When it has something to say,] the United States never keeps quiet. It never did, nor will it now. The United States' aggressive manner was even better demonstrated in Rice's statement that [they] 'want to see Taiwan have real space in the international community!' This statement is akin to 'sending a diplomatic note' to warn Beijing. If one compares it with 'Mr. Ma's' recent calls for *modus vivendi*, diplomatic truce, 1992 consensus; his willingness to [condescend to] 'equalize [himself]' with the chairman of ARATS; and his move of sending [SEF Chairman] Chiang Pin-kun to meet with Chinese President] Hu Jintao personally to ask for [Taiwan's] international space, [one can tell that] it did not happen by accident that China has been playing little disruptive tricks in various international organizations.

"Evidently, the United States is trying to adjust the already twisted fulcrum in this triangular relationship to reinstate the balance so that it can manage it. Judging from the perspective of the Taiwan people's interests, we welcome the emergence of such an international power. But if we look at it from the angle of Taiwan's sovereignty, why cannot our government bring our ability and wisdom into play and take the initiative in handling such a fulcrum? The fact that we let ourselves become the cause of such imbalance should receive severe criticism. Ma's national security and diplomatic teams should work harder, or there will definitely be a limit to the [Taiwan] people's patience."

B) "[With] the Ma Administration Changing Its Strategic Direction, the Taiwan-Japan-U.S. Alliance Is Drifting as Well"

Lo Chih-cheng, an associate professor of the Department of Political Science at [Taiwan's] Soochow University, wrote in the "Weekly Column" of the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (6/22):

"... Switching from the practice of the Bian administration, which used 'democracy-ism' as the core of its foreign policy, [President] Ma Ying-jeou seems to have regarded 'nationalism' as the pillar of his national strategic structure. Previously, the DPP pushed for establishing democratic alliances with the United States and Japan and emphasized that such alliances were not only based on practical interests but also on their persistence and maintenance of the common values of democracy. ...

"...In Taiwan's relations with the three major countries -- China, Japan and the United States -- will the Ma administration adopt the same thinking and intentions [as those of South Korea]? In other words, will [the Ma administration] regard cross-Straits [relations] as 'compatriot relations' while viewing Taiwan's relations with Japan and with the United States as 'alliances,' ... which are less important? The re-definition of Taiwan's essential relations with major countries, as well as the changes to [Taiwan's] strategic thinking that ensued from such re-definition, are probably the most worrisome aspects of the Ma administration. ...

"Whether the allegation that Taiwan demanded that the United States suspend arms sales to Taiwan in order not to sabotage the atmosphere for the resumption of cross-Straits negotiations is true or not, this kind of appeal is definitely a corollary to the strategic switch of the Ma administration. Regardless of whether Taiwan intends to continue procuring arms from the United States or not, China's position has been very clear, namely, the United States has to end all arms sales to Taiwan. In fact, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman also made the request publicly one day before Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation and China's Association for Relations across the Strait signed agreements.

"As a result, if Beijing demands that Taiwan reduce or even cease arms procurement from the United States, or else it will be unwilling to proceed improving cross-Straits relations, the Ma administration might face great difficulty under the pressure of not being able to afford to have cross-Straits relations move backwards.

Perhaps quite a lot of people will reach the same conclusion as to the question of whether [the Ma administration] will eventually make a zero-sum choice under the thinking that 'mainland policy should supersede foreign policy;' or as to what kind of strategic choice it will make, especially considering that 'compatriots are insiders and allies are outsiders?' ..."

C) "Taiwan, the United States, Japan and China: Two [Separate] Chess Games or One Single Chess Game?"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (6/23):

"... Under such 'new circumstances,' even though Beijing has yet to positively accept Ma Ying-jeou's proposal of 'no unification, no independence, and no use of force' as well as 'one China with respective interpretations,' it did not come forth to deny it either ([Chinese President] Hu Jintao has told his U.S. counterpart George [W. Bush](#) that he accepted 'one China with respective interpretations.') Henceforth, not only have transportation relations across the Taiwan Strait been changed because of [the launch of] direct transportation, but more importantly, the thinking and mentality of both sides of the Taiwan Strait have also changed. Once there is a change to cross-Strait relations, the chess game played among 'Taiwan, the United States, Japan and China' will also change accordingly. The most significant change is that previously, any mediation across the Taiwan Strait must go through Washington. But the bridge across the Strait has now been constructed, so there is no need to go through the United States any more. ...

"Now, with thawing cross-Strait relations, the two 'separate chess games' [of cross-Strait relations and Taiwan-U.S.-Japan relations] can be merged into one single chess game. Relations between Taipei, Washington and Tokyo ... will become more vibrant. Not only that, if a 'diplomatic truce' takes effect in the future, neither side of the Taiwan Strait will suffer coercion or distortion from their neighboring countries any longer. ..."

YOUNG